IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A mechanical handle switch assembly integrated within a door of a vehicle and utilized for actuating a vehicle-based system, comprising;.

a door handle mechanism coupled to the door for actuation by a user, said door handle mechanism, being movable in a substantially outboard direction for both actuating the vehicle-based system and unlatching the door,

a drive train mechanism coupled to said door handle mechanism and being actuated by said door handle mechanism;

a switch device operatively coupled to said drive train mechanism and being selectively operated by said drive train mechanism to actuate said vehicle-based system;

said drive train mechanism having a predetermined gear ratio such that an initial movement of said door handle mechanism operates said switch device;

said drive train mechanism including a first gear member, a second gear member, and a cam mechanism;

said first gear member extending from said door handle mechanism;

said second gear member operatively coupled to said first gear member.;

said cam mechanism integrated with said second gear member and directly contacting said switch device for operating said switch device; and

a damping mechanism coupled to one of said door handle mechanism and said drive train mechanism for slowing movement of said door handle mechanism and said drive train mechanism;

wherein said door handle mechanism is movable within a predetermined travel distance, said predetermined travel distance including a switch-triggering distance and an unlatching distance that is greater than and inclusive of said switch-triggering distance, said door handle mechanism being moved by said switch-triggering distance for actuating said switch device, said door handle mechanism being moved by said unlatching distance for unlatching the door, said unlatching distance sized greater than said switch triggering distance such that a controller can authorize entry prior to said

door handle mechanism unlatching the door.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Withdrawn) The mechanical handle switch assembly recited in claim 1 wherein said door handle mechanism has a pull configuration for unlatching the door.

5. (Original) The mechanical handle switch assembly recited in claim 1 wherein said door handle mechanism has a lift configuration for unlatching the door.

6-7. (Cancelled)

8. (Previously Withdrawn) The mechanical handle switch assembly recited in claim 1 wherein said drive train mechanism is a lever mechanism.

9. (Original) The mechanical handle switch assembly recited in claim 1 wherein said switch device is biased to an open position.

10. (Currently Amended) A passively actuated vehicle system comprising:

a mechanical handle switch assembly integrated within a door of a vehicle and utilized for actuating a vehicle-based system, comprising:.

a door handle mechanism coupled to the door for actuation by a user, said door handle mechanism, being movable in a substantially outboard direction for both actuating the vehicle-based system and unlatching the door,

a drive train mechanism coupled to said door handle mechanism and being actuated by said door handle mechanism;

a switch device operatively coupled to said drive train mechanism and being selectively operated by said drive train mechanism to actuate said vehicle-based system;

said drive train mechanism having a predetermined gear ratio such that an initial

movement of said door handle mechanism operates said switch device;

said drive train mechanism including a first gear member, a second gear member, and a cam mechanism;

said first gear member extending from said door handle mechanism;

said second gear member operatively coupled to said first gear member;

said cam mechanism integrated with said second gear member and directly contacting said switch device for operating said switch device;

a damping mechanism coupled to one of said door handle mechanism and said drive train mechanism for slowing movement of said door handle mechanism and said drive train mechanism;

wherein said door handle mechanism is movable within a predetermined travel distance, said predetermined travel distance including a switch-triggering distance and an unlatching distance that is greater than and inclusive of said switch-triggering distance, said door handle mechanism being moved by said switch-triggering distance for actuating said switch device, said door handle mechanism being moved by said unlatching distance for unlatching the door;

~~said mechanical handle switch assembly recited in claim 1;~~

a controller;

a vehicle-based transceiver coupled to said controller;

a portable transponder carried by a user and utilized for communicating with said vehicle based transponder,

a locking mechanism coupled to said controller for actuation by said controller;

said switch device coupled to one of said controller and said vehicle-based transceiver, and in use actuating said vehicle-based transceiver to transmit a challenge signal to said portable transponder;

said locking mechanism unlocking said door after said controller determines that said user is an authorized entity,

wherein the ratio of said unlatching distance to said switch triggering distance is configured such that said controller authorizes entry prior to said door handle mechanism unlatching the door.

11. (Previously Presented) The passively actuated vehicle system recited in claim 10 wherein said switch-triggering distance is substantially less than said unlatching distance.

12. (Withdrawn) The passive entry system recited in claim 10 wherein said door handle mechanism has a pull configuration for unlatching the door.

13. (Previously Presented) The passively actuated vehicle system recited in claim 10 wherein said door handle mechanism has a lift configuration for unlatching the door.

14-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Withdrawn) The passive entry system recited in claim 10 wherein said drive train mechanism is a lever mechanism.

17. (Previously Presented) The passively actuated vehicle system recited in claim 10 wherein said switch device is biased to an open position.

18-20. (Cancelled)

21. (Previously Presented) The passively actuated vehicle system recited in claim 10, wherein said passively actuated vehicle system is a passive entry system for a vehicle.